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## ABSTRACT

Since fall 1982, on the recommendation of a collegewide task force on student assessment, a mandatory assessment and voluntary placement program has been operating at Victor Valley College (VVC). Assessment testing takes place 3 weeks before registration and also on a continuous basis throughout the semester. The 2-hour testing period is followed by a half-hour orientation period during which the tests are scored. Assessment testing is mandatory for new students, with limited exceptions. Placement in English classes is also mandatory, based on a combined score on the reading and writing portions of the test, but placement in other courses is voluntary, based upon the student's reading level and the reading level of the courses as listed in the class schedule. Between August 1982 and June 1984, 9,745 students took the assessment test and enrolled in classes at VVC. An analysis of their test scores and enrollment patterns revealed: (1) 34% of the students tested scored above average in reading; (2) 80% of the students failed to score above 70% on the decimal portion of the mathematics test; (3) total enrollment in reading classes increased by 88%, while enrollment in basic math skills courses increased by 124%; and (4) between 1982 and 1984, there was a negligible increase in the overall college grade point average and an upward trend in retention, but a decline in the enrollment of new students. Samples of the placement recommendations for students are appended. (HB)

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# Skills Assessment at Victor Valley College



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**Victorville, CA 92392**

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## SKILLS ASSESSMENT AT VICTOR VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Report prepared January, 1985 by  
Dr. V. Holten Vice President for Instructional Services

**BACKGROUND and HISTORY:** Victor Valley Community College District, which was created in 1960, serves the students living in the growing high desert area between San Bernardino and Barstow and includes the communities of Victorville, Apple Valley, and Hesperia. During the twenty-five years of its existence, the college has grown to serve a student population of approximately 4600 with a staff of sixty-five full time faculty and an hourly staff of over one hundred.

A mandatory assessment and voluntary placement program for all students was initiated in the fall semester of 1982 in response to faculty concern for quality education and the need to identify student basic skill deficiencies. These items had been discussed at a faculty workshop a few years earlier and sparked college-wide interest in exploring the problem. Dr. John Roueche of the University of Texas was invited to share his research with the college faculty and staff, and Superintendent/President Burton Wadsworth (now retired) convened a college-wide task force to conduct research and make recommendations regarding the implementation of a student assessment program at Victor Valley College.

Dr. LeRoy Cordrey of Fullerton College was retained as a consultant and in 1982 the Community College Fund for Instructional Improvement awarded a grant to Victor Valley College for its assessment project on the basis of a proposal which had been submitted by Dr. Milton Danielson, Vice President for Instructional Services (now retired). The college-wide Assessment Committee, co-chaired by William Alcorn, Vice President for Student Services and Dr. Danielson, selected Dr. Donald Pugh of the Counseling Department to coordinate the assessment testing. During the spring semester of 1982 the Assessment Committee selected the English, Reading, and Mathematical Skills portions of the Comparative Guidance Placement Program (College Entrance Examination Board) as the assessment instrument, designed the computer print-out which was to be given to students, proposed curricular changes to the College Curriculum Committee, and determined textbook reading levels for all courses, which are included in the schedule of classes. Assessment testing for all new and returning students began on August 4, 1982 for the semester which was to begin in September.

**PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSMENT TESTING:** Assessment testing is scheduled approximately three weeks before registration and also takes place on a continuing basis throughout the semester. The testing period is approximately two hours, and there is an orientation period of approximately a half hour while the college Data Processing Center

scores the tests and provides each student with a computer print-out of the test results (Attachments 1 and 2). Assessment testing is mandatory for all new students prior to registration with the following exceptions:

Those who have completed 60 units or more or have the equivalent of an associate degree or higher;

Those who have been identified as learning handicapped;

Those who are enrolled only in non-reading dependent classes (studio art, photography, ceramics, physical education activity, music, theater performance, and welding classes), or other exempted class (Allied Health refresher classes such as EMT, CPR, etc.).

Placement in English classes is mandatory, based upon a combined score on the reading and writing portions of the test, but placement in other courses is voluntary based upon the student's reading level and the reading level of the courses as listed in the class schedule. Reading classes are recommended but are not required. The mathematics portion of the test covers only computational skills such as operations with whole numbers, fractions, and decimals and does not include algebra.

It is not necessary for students to see a counselor prior to registration. At the present time the college does not have an intervention program to contact students who are encountering difficulty during the semester, although a pilot project involving intervention will be implemented during the spring semester 1985.

**RESULTS:** The statistical information was compiled by Dr. Charles Peterson, Dean of Institutional Research and Occupational Education; Nicholas Halisky, Dean of Off-Campus and Continuing Education; and David Longshore, Department Chair in Mathematics. In the four semesters of Assessment testing ending in June 1984, 9745 students took the assessment test and enrolled in classes.

1) Summaries of the Reading, English, and Math results are given in Tables I, II, and III. It is interesting to note that 34% of the students tested scored above average in reading (grade 13 or above) and almost 32% qualified to take English 1A. The results in math indicate that 80% of the students tested failed to score above 70% on the decimal portion of the test.

2) Since the implementation of the assessment program, enrollment in English 1A increased 22%, while enrollment in English 50 increased 105%.

3) The total enrollment in reading classes increased from 217 to 408, an increase of 88%.

4) Enrollment in the basic math skills course increased from 168 to 377, for a total increase of 124%.

5) Students are required to make an assessment appointment prior to taking the test, and the number that did not test after making an appointment has been averaging 13%.

6) Another 13% have taken the assessment test but did not enroll. A sampling of these students indicated that there were 26 reasons why the students tested but did not enroll. The reasons mentioned most frequently were:

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Working hours changed     | 17% |
| Will enroll next semester | 13% |
| Classes closed            | 11% |
| Moving                    | 9%  |

7) The results examined after four semesters of assessment testing indicated a negligible increase in overall college grade point average (2.79 before and 2.81 after).

8) There appears to be an upward trend in retention. NOTE (70% in 1981-2 compared with 72% in 1982-3).

9) There is an indication that assessment testing may be a factor in the decline in enrollment of new students, the onset of which coincided with assessment testing in 1982.

THE FUTURE: 1) After almost three years of an assessment program, it is the consensus of the college faculty and staff that assessment testing should be continued, for it seems to provide the students with information needed for placement in English, as well as a determination of the level at which s/he is reading.

2) The mathematics portion of the test is under review and discussions are underway to test algebraic skills rather than computational skills.

3) At the present time the college is compiling expectancy tools for success (grade of C or better) in certain courses based on assessment scores.

# VICTOR VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## ASSESSMENT TEST RESULTS (August 1982 - June 1984)

TABLE I  
Reading Levels

| <u>GRADE LEVEL</u>     | <u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u> | <u>PERCENT</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Excellent (14+)        | 1402                   | 14.4           |
| Above Average (13)     | 1920                   | 19.7           |
| Average (11 & 12)      | 2923                   | 30.0           |
| Below Average (9 & 10) | 1944                   | 20.0           |
| Low (7 & 8)            | 1145                   | 11.7           |
| Very Low (<7)          | <u>411</u>             | <u>4.2</u>     |
|                        | 9745                   | 100.0          |

TABLE II  
English Placement

| <u>CLASS</u> | <u>NO. OF STUDENTS</u> | <u>PERCENT</u> |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------|
| English 1A   | 3072                   | 31.5           |
| English 50   | 4859                   | 49.9           |
| English 60   | <u>1810</u>            | <u>18.6</u>    |
|              | 9745                   | 100.0          |

TABLE III  
Math Computational Skills

| <u>TEST</u>   | <u>PERCENT PASSING</u> |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Whole Numbers | 67                     |
| Fractions     | 28                     |
| Decimals      | 20                     |

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VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE

NAME: JOE

COLLEGE

DATE: 03/23/84

SSN: 111-11-1111

THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT TESTS YOU HAVE JUST COMPLETED. THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTENDED TO HELP YOU PLAN A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM AT VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR TEST SCORES, CONTACT THE COUNSELING CENTER.

ENGLISH/Writing Placement      CLEARED FOR ENGLISH 50 (DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL, A WRITING SAMPLE WILL CONFIRM YOUR ENGLISH PLACEMENT OR RESULT IN YOUR TRANSFER TO ANOTHER ENGLISH LEVEL)

YOU SHOULD REGISTER FOR ENGLISH 50, WRITING FUNDAMENTALS. HOWEVER, IF YOU HAVE BEEN OUT OF SCHOOL FOR SOME TIME AND NEED A THOROUGH STUDY OF ENGLISH FUNDAMENTALS, TAKE ENGLISH 60, BASIC WRITING. AT THIS TIME, YOU MAY WISH TO LIMIT YOUR CLASS SELECTION TO COURSES NOT REQUIRING A GREAT DEAL OF WRITING.

READING PLACEMENT      LEVEL D

YOU NEED TO IMPROVE YOUR READING SKILLS. SIGN UP FOR \*BASIC READING SKILLS\* (ENGLISH 69). LIMIT YOUR CHOICES TO LEVEL C AND D CLASSES UNTIL YOUR SKILLS IMPROVE. AFTER SCHOOL BEGINS, CONTACT THE LEARNING CENTER FOR ADDITIONAL HELP IN ANY SUBJECT. PHONE 245-4271, EXT. 290, AND ASK TO SPEAK WITH MRS. BEARD. RIGHT NOW OR WHENEVER YOU NEED HELP, CALL UPON THE COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE STUDENT CENTER. PHONE 245-4271, EXT. 296.

MATH - COMPUTATION

THE COMPUTATION TEST WILL GIVE YOU AN OVERALL PICTURE OF YOUR MATH SKILLS.

TAKE MATHEMATICS 67 BEFORE TAKING ANY CLASSES WHICH REQUIRE MATHEMATICS. YOU SCORED LESS THAN 70 PERCENT CORRECT ON THE COMPUTATION PORTION OF THE ASSESSMENT TEST. MATHEMATICS 17 WILL GIVE YOU THE REVIEW YOU NEED.

FOR ASSISTANCE CONTACT:

|                 |                |                    |                                                    |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| LEARNING CENTER | LIBRARY        | 245-4271, EXT. 290 | BASIC SKILL BUILDING IN READING, WRITING AND MATH. |
| TUTORIAL        | LIBRARY        | 245-4271, EXT. 290 | INDIVIDUALIZED HELP IN MANY SUBJECTS.              |
| COUNSELING      | STUDENT CENTER | 245-4271, EXT. 296 | CAREER, EDUCATIONAL AND PERSONAL COUNSELING.       |

CAREER PLANNING

IF YOU ARE UNCLEAR ABOUT YOUR COLLEGE MAJOR OR UNDECIDED ABOUT A CAREER CHOICE, SIGN UP FOR CAREER PLANNING (GUIDANCE 4E1).

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VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE

NAME: JANE

COLLEGE

DATE: 03/23/84

SSN: 222-27-2222

THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT TESTS YOU HAVE JUST COMPLETED. THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTENDED TO HELP YOU PLAN A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM AT VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW YOUR TEST SCORES, CONTACT THE COUNSELING CENTER.

ENGLISH/Writing Placement      CLEARED FOR ENGLISH 1A (DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL, A WRITING SAMPLE WILL CONFIRM YOUR ENGLISH PLACEMENT OR RESULT IN YOUR TRANSFER TO ANOTHER ENGLISH LEVEL)

CONGRATULATIONS. YOU SHOULD SIGN UP FOR ENGLISH 1A, COMPOSITION AND READING. IF YOU NEED A REVIEW OF BASICS, SIGN UP FOR ENGLISH 50, WRITING FUNDAMENTALS.

READING PLACEMENT      LEVEL A

YOUR TEST SCORE SHOWS YOU ARE AN ABOVE AVERAGE READER. ALL CLASSES FOR WHICH YOU MEET THE COURSE PREREQUISITES ARE OPEN TO YOU. IF YOU HAVE LITTLE TIME TO STUDY, YOU MAY WANT TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF CLASSES FOR WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF READING IS REQUIRED. SHOULD YOU NEED HELP SETTING OF A PROGRAM, CONTACT COUNSELING SERVICES IN THE STUDENT CENTER. PHONE 245-4271, EXT. 296.

MATH - COMPUTATION

THE COMPUTATION TEST WILL GIVE YOU AN OVERALL PICTURE OF YOUR MATH SKILLS.

YOU SCORED 70 PERCENT OR HIGHER ON THE ARITHMETIC COMPUTATION TEST. YOUR SKILLS ARE GOOD WITH WHOLE NUMBERS, FRACTIONS, DECIMALS, AND PERCENTAGES.

FOR ASSISTANCE CONTACT:

|                 |                |                    |                                                    |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| LEARNING CENTER | LIBRARY        | 245-4271, EXT. 240 | BASIC SKILL BUILDING IN READING, WRITING AND MATH. |
| TUTORIAL        | LIBRARY        | 245-4271, EXT. 240 | INDIVIDUALIZED HELP IN MANY SUBJECTS.              |
| COUNSELING      | STUDENT CENTER | 245-4271, EXT. 296 | CAREER, EDUCATIONAL AND PERSONAL COUNSELING.       |

CAREER PLANNING

IF YOU ARE UNCLEAR ABOUT YOUR COLLEGE MAJOR OR UNDECIDED ABOUT A CAREER CHOICE, SIGN UP FOR CAREER PLANNING (GUIDANCE 4E).

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